

# COAL MINE DUST RULES MUST BE WITHDRAWN

## HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2003

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker. It is with alarm that today members of the United Mine Workers of America rally on the steps of the State Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia, to protest one of the greatest threats to their health and safety in many years.

It is unfortunate, but true, that this threat comes from their own Federal Government, in the form of proposed rules issued by the Mine Health and Safety Administration (MSHA) that would increase fourfold the amount of dust levels permitted in underground coal mines.

As a May 6, 2003, editorial in the Beckley, West Virginia, Register Herald pointed out, a recent study conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and MSHA already casts doubt on the efficacy of existing coal mine dust compliance rules. The editorial points out that about 1,000 miners still die a year from the dreaded black lung disease which is contracted as a result of sustained contact with coal mine dust. And as the editorial notes: "We need to dig for answers quickly, so the next century of coal mining can be accomplished without the threat of black lung disease." Following my remarks I ask that the editorial be printed in its entirety.

Yet, despite this study and a whole host of other evidence, MSHA on March 6th of this year published two proposed rules which would dramatically harm the health of our Nation's coal miners and conflict with both the letter and intent of the landmark Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969.

This week, in a letter I wrote to Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, I asked that these proposed rules be immediately withdrawn. There is no credible reason why any alleged "mine health" regulation should allow permissible dust levels to increase from the current 2 milligrams/cubic meter standards to 8 milligrams as would be possible under the March 6th dust rules.

The Labor Department and its agency, MSHA, should heed the call of the Register Herald editorial and take actions to eliminate the threat of black lung disease rather than allow increased dust levels in the Nation's coal mines.

### BLACK LUNG: 30 YEARS AFTER PROTECTIONS, DISEASE AND QUESTIONS REMAIN

Under the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, miners are to be exposed to no more than 2 milligrams of coal dust per cubic meter of air over eight hours—equal to a debris speck the size of a pinhead.

These federal coal-dust controls were designed to protect miners so black lung no longer would be an occupational hazard.

So, 30 years later, have these restraints been successful in halting a disease that reduces the ability to breathe and leads to heart failure?

At first glance, that seems to be the case. But statistics sometimes can be as clear as mud.

According to the study conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration, black lung disease continues to develop in miners who have worked their entire careers under current, and supposedly acceptable, coal dust limits.

X-rays show that rates among miners with 20 years or less in the mines produce "no clear trend," the study said. Black lung "continues to occur among working coal miners, even among those first employed after the current federal exposure limit became effective" in 1972.

Even among surface miners, X-rays found that black lung occurred in 1.9 percent of cases.

Surface miners "had been thought not to have been at much risk because they work out in the open," noted Dr. E. Lee Petsonk, one of the study's authors and senior medical officer in the surveillance branch at the health institute's Division of Respiratory Disease Studies in Morgantown. "It is a finding of concern."

The \$64,000 question, then, is a simple "why?" Why do new cases of black lung disease continue to develop in miners when coal-dust limits established to protect miners have been in effect for more than 30 years?

Are the dust levels being complied with? Are the rules still not stringent enough? And why are surface miners developing black lung?

Answering these questions is vital, because about 1,000 miners die from black lung each year. Many of those are West Virginia miners.

Coal, we pointed out in this space yesterday, will be around for a while. By a most conservative estimate, there are at least 100 years of coal deposits still to mine.

We need to dig for answers quickly, so the next century of coal mining can be accomplished without the threat of black lung disease.

## GIRL SCOUT TROOP 378

### HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2003

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Heart of Florida Girl Scout Troop 378 in Citrus County, FL for their service to the community and to the people of my district.

The troop recently learned about the importance of voting and about the functions of American government as part of the "I-Count" Voter Education program and each Troop Member participating in the program received a patch upon completion.

Mr. Speaker, as you may know, those in the Girl Scout program measure their accomplishments and award merit based on the number of patches they accumulate. As part of earning this patch, the girls studied intently and listened to a speech I gave about the importance of voting—and how one vote can be the deciding factor in some instances.

It was when I spoke to the girls and had the chance to meet them and hear about all they had done in the community that I realized the tremendous amount of work they had done and their intense dedication to the Girl Scout program.

Mr. Speaker, let me briefly mention just a few of the things this group of girls has done throughout their years of involvement with this program.

As Daisies the girls learned to do crafts and learned the Girl Scout promise. They went on campouts, marched in parades and sang at Surry Place Nursing home.

As Brownies, the troop went to nursing homes to sing, volunteered at various events and continued to appear in local parades.

As Juniors, they collected old, unused cell phones to benefit battered women, helped at the local "Relay for Life," which benefits the American Cancer Society, and presented the local volunteer firefighters with cookies to thank them for their work in the community.

Now that the girls are Cadets they are still collecting cell phones and will be continuing their involvement in the "Relay for Life" program. This past Holiday Season they "Gift Adopted" a local under-privileged girl, and donated money and new gifts to make her Christmas brighter.

Currently they are saving the proceeds from the sale of their Girl Scout cookies for a trip to Savannah, GA to see where Juliette Gordon Low, the Girl Scout founder, was born.

Amber Auth, Nicole Bruno, Melissa Fonczak, Emily Stanton, Rebecca Rose, Kimberly Carbonari, Rebecca Morse, along with troop leader Mimi Rose and assistant troop leader Nora Auth, deserve to be commended for their service and dedication. I am proud to have them as my constituents and am honored to be their representation in Congress.

## TRIBUTE TO MS. KATHERINE HALLBERG CELEBRATING THE FIRST PLACE WINNER OF THE 14TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL ART COMPETITION, AN ARTISTIC DISCOVERY

### HON. MICHAEL F. DOYLE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2003

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Katherine Hallberg from Woodland Hills School District. Katherine is the top winner of the 2003 14th Congressional District High School Art Competition, An Artistic Discovery.

Katherine's acrylic painting entitled "Technicolor Portrait" was chosen from an outstanding collection of entries. Katherine is a young woman of considerable talent and is sure to have many successes in her future. The judges were very impressed by her use of light and shadow.

I look forward to seeing Katherine's artwork displayed in the U.S. Capitol building along with the artwork of the other competition winners from across the country. I am pleased to be associated with Katherine's artistic talents.

Congratulations Katherine. I wish you all the best of luck in the future.

## REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

### HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2003

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, three years ago, Mr. Chen Shui-bian was democratically elected President of the Republic of China on Taiwan. His election by the people of that island showed the world that democracy was alive and well and could easily thrive in a Chinese society like Taiwan.